

The SHARP Revised Training Program and Sexual Assault Awareness Month

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As the Army remains engaged abroad, it is imperative we remain focused on issues that have a direct impact on our institution, as a whole and upon each of us individually, as Soldiers and Civilians. April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), and SAAM recognition events allows us to do just that and more as the Army works towards “Achieving Cultural Change” in Phase III of the Army’s “I. A.M. (Intervene, Act, Motivate) Strong” campaign. As part of this effort, the Sexual Harassment Assault Response and Prevention office’s theme for this year’s SAAM is “Committed to Achieving Cultural Change to Stop Sexual Assault.”

We must not forget that we are an Army family, forged and bonded together as brothers and sisters with a common purpose to serve in defense of our nation. As the golden adage goes, “Love for others what you would love for yourself.” We would not want a family member, whether male or female, to be victimized by sexual harassment and/or sexual assault. Likewise, we should not want someone else’s family member to be subjected to these acts. It is up to each one of us to be proactive in changing the Army’s Culture and combating sexual harassment and sexual assault. Sexual harassment and sexual assault affects us all—whether we’re willing to admit it or not.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault are not only indefensible morally and legally, they are reprehensible and incompatible with our Army values... The senior leadership is fully engaged and committed to fighting sexual harassment and sexual assault within our services. Challenges are seldom easy; but the end- stated objective is achievable and obtainable!

The Secretary of the Army, the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), and the Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) have developed and initiated a comprehensive campaign strategy focused on integration and transformation. We have shifted our strategy on sexual harassment and sexual assault from a risk avoidance posture focusing mainly on avoiding becoming a victim to a prevention posture focusing on providing training to instill in every Soldier and Civilian their personal duty to intervene to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault. Although, our Army recently has changed CSA and SMA, the newly selected CSA (GEN Dempsey) and SMA (SMA Chandler) are fully committed to this campaign.

In pursuit of its goal to combat the scourge of sexual harassment/ sexual assault, the Army has partnered with a vast array of institutions and subject matter experts from the different spheres of our society (business, academic, and governments--private and

public sectors) to revise and produce a new set of dynamic-synergistic training tools aimed at changing negative social behavioral trends.

Instead of throwing out the former training with the proverbial “bath water”, the Army has transformed, integrated and realigned the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response and Prevention of Sexual Harassment training curriculum into Sexual Harassment/Assault Response Prevention (SHARP) Program. This revised training curriculum is aligned with the Army’s I. A.M. Strong Sexual Harassment Assault Prevention Campaign.

The revised program promotes more interaction between instructor and students; between performers and audiences using the latest educational and social-behavioral techniques. This method of training is done to enforce and reinforce social behavior norms, which are completely aligned and in agreement with our core values.

The revised training curriculum is based on synergistic delivery strategy involving institutional training, messaging, signage, videos, and Drill Sergeants’ hip-pocket training material to actively engage soldier into thinking and understanding what are acceptable and unacceptable social behaviors by living up to our core Army values daily. Our core values are totally incompatible with sexual harassment and sexual assault. This new revised curriculum is now being implemented and taught at the Drill Sergeants School, all Basic Combat Training (BCT) and One Station Unit Training (OSUT) units Army-wide.

In order for cultural change to be effective, take root and produce positive effects it is imperative that it starts with the future leaders of tomorrow. Our first term enlisted Soldiers represent the bulk of our force; the revised SHARP curriculum begins with them. Our Drill Sergeant cadre are the driving force for implementing and developing this cultural change. As the primary mentor and trainer of Soldiers, they are well suited and prepared for this vital mission.

From the very first day at the Reception Station, first terms Soldiers are greeted with the I. A.M. Strong campaign slogan signage. Upon arriving at their BCT or OSUT trainees are introduced with the “Sex Rules” signs and posters conveying 10 sexual rules, which are aligned with Army core values; these rules are woven into real life situation scenarios and taught throughout the Red, White and Blue phases of the training cycle. Trainees also attend a live semi-impromptu interactive production called “Sex Signals;” performed by two actors. Presently, there are 3 Sex Signals Teams—two regional CONUS teams and one traveling team--which perform “Sex Signals” overseas and throughout CONUS. The production is live and interacts with the audience while performing spontaneous sketches about unacceptable sexual behaviors and norms, which can easily lead to sexual harassment and sexual assaults.

The two cast members—comprised of a male and female--interact with the trainees during and after each skit by reinforcing sex rules and helping the trainees understand and develop appropriate sexual-social behaviors. The sketches are humorous, captivating and thought provoking. The entire performance lasts 90 minutes, while actively engaging the audience for input and feedback, ending with a positive message on appropriate sexual behavior.

The newly revised training program for BCT is only the beginning; similar revised SHARP training programs have been developed for Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) A and BLOC B. BLOC A is the pre-commissioning training phase for aspiring future Army Officers of the Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC) on major college's campuses; and BOLC B is the post-commissioned initial training phase for newly commissioned Army Officers. BLOC A and B revised SHARP training programs are scheduled to begin in the near future.

By assuming a personal responsibility for achieving cultural change, we can continue to fight against sexual harassment and sexual assault. Our senior leadership has given us the vision, the mission, and the means to do just that.